

The Builder.

No. CCXCII.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 1848.



DURING the week we have made so many memoranda in our note-book, of passing occurrences, and matters proposed or in agitation, which are likely to be new to our readers and interest them, that we are disposed forthwith to empty its contents upon them in the shape of a budget of news, certain, at all events, to afford them subjects for conversation if not for thought. We have been grieving over the destruction of the Colonnade before the houses in the Quadrant, Regent-street, considering it an alteration greatly to be deplored: it is cutting off a principal feature from the face of the West-end,—taking off its nose, indeed. The alteration, if it has not been already commenced, will be next week, under the direction of Mr. Pennethorne, and will be completed forthwith. It will include an enriched string under the two-pair windows of the houses, new dressings to the one-pair windows, with an ornamental balcony to every house, and a rearrangement of the front of the mezzanine.

Knocking down, to a much better purpose, is going on in Westminster, preparatory to the formation of the intended new streets there. The noted Duck-lane is disappearing, and the light will be let into a neighbourhood which for years has been the hot-bed of disease and the nursery of crime,—a foul centre, whence radiated evils which affected the whole community. The claims of the owners and occupiers of property required for these improvements are being settled in the "Court of Compensation" and by private reference. In the former place last week the claim of Mr. Courtney, the coach-maker, trading under the firm of Barker and Co., of Chandos-street, for extensive premises in the new line, was tried. The claim was for 1,600*l*. The commissioners offered the nominal sum of 5*s*. The high bailiff, before whom it was tried, said the claimant was entitled to liberal compensation for the forced sale, and so the jury gave 400*l*. At the same time, the claim of the freeholder of the Coopers' Arms, Stratton-ground (Mr. Collingford), was tried. The plaintiff held these premises, which were desirably situate for business, at 65*s*. a year, but though the lease would not expire till this year, the tenant, whose stake is always large in this description of property, and often equal to that of the landlord, had renewed it in 1845 for twenty-one years, and paid a premium of 550*l*., at a time when the trade was known to be much depressed. Counsel said the property was in every respect equal to ground-rents. The jury gave 1,600*l*.

We fear there is a disposition on the part of the Westminster commissioners, or their advisers, to deal illiberally towards tenants for short terms. Notice, that the premises would be required, was given four years ago, and has been hanging over their heads to the present time, when the term of some of them has nearly expired, and they are told that they have now no interest in the property, or not more than will equal a claim for dilapidations, set up by the commissioners

in cases where they have purchased the superior interest. Juries and arbitrators will, we doubt not, see the matter in a different light.

Whether or not it is still necessary that the Westminster Improvement Commissioners should reserve a site for the proposed CAXTON MEMORIAL is more than doubtful. The question as to the fate of this once promising project, which was asked in our pages some time ago and mournfully echoed by the majority of our contemporaries, has brought us intimation that it is, up to this time, a failure. Political events and commercial panics are given as the reasons, but will scarcely be deemed sufficient by those who know how loud and immediate the response to the original suggestion was, how many persons came forward ready to lend their aid, and what little pains was taken to secure it. To ensure success good management seemed scarcely needful: all that the project appeared to require was, that it should escape bad.

A purchase recently concluded by the Government is likely, indirectly, to aid the progress of improvement in parts adjoining Westminster. The Royal Military Asylum, in the King's-road, Chelsea, was built on a very short lease,—much too short,—and in about twenty years from this time, would have reverted to the freeholder, Lord Cadogan. The Government being desirous to retain the property, and his lordship willing, a Bill to facilitate the purchase of the reversion was brought into Parliament and passed (showing how noiselessly things of this sort may be done, when required by those who have power). The price to be paid was left by mutual arrangement to the decision of our old friend Mr. J. W. Higgins (the late official referee), and the whole matter, is, we believe, nearly settled. One result of this transaction, unless we are misinformed, will be the early commencement of the *embankment of the Thames at Chelsea*.—Lord Cadogan intending so to appropriate some of the money received. We look anxiously for the commencement of this most desirable improvement. The banks of the Thames are at this time a disgrace to us; and the state of the river itself, now daily thronged with overlaiden steam-boats, a crying evil. Passing down the river two days ago in one of the cheap steam-boats, which are a boon of no small value to our population, the stench at Blackfriars-bridge from the Fleet ditch, and for at least half-a-mile beyond, was quite intolerable, and, according to the captain of the boat, was not then doing its worst. If it be the case, as we truly believe, that a bad smell in nine cases out of ten is a sign of danger, some alteration here is loudly called for. We commend the subject to the consideration of Mr. Chadwick and the new commission.

The rude, ugly, and unscientific, not to say dangerous, landing-places which stud the banks of the river are sad eye-sores, where they might be, and ought to be, adornments. Proper advice is seldom sought; the usefulness of the beautiful is not understood, and therefore never recognised.

Touching the rareness, comparatively, with which the architect is appealed to in England: we received an account, yesterday, of a *fête* at Bourges, where 1,800 of the National Guards dined with the authorities in the Archbishop's gardens; and to whom were the arrangements of the *fête* deputed,—the fitting up of the dining-place in a natural grove, and the decoration of the city?—why, to two architects and one sculptor—Messrs. Beaujonau, Bour-

bon, and Dumontet. The result is said to have been very satisfactory.

Restorations are still going on briskly in various parts of the country. After making a professional survey the other day at Elstree—where, by the way, Mr. George Smith, the architect of the Mercers' Company, has recently bought an estate, and is making himself a "retreat"—we dropped down to Harrow, and, before taking the train, fagged up the ascent to look at the old church and the magnificent prospect, of which Byron said,—

"Oh! as I trace again thy verdant hill,
Mine eyes admire, my heart adores thee still."

It was a glorious afternoon—one of the first we had had for some time past—and the view would have paid for a ten miles' journey. We found the church in the possession of the workmen, and a long-needed repair and restoration going on under Mr. Scott,—lucky Mr. Scott. The oak roof—a curious one, as many of our readers know—has been taken off, re-framed, made good where needed, and stained and varnished. New windows, of Bath stone, have been put into all the openings;* the walls inside have been plastered; the stonework freed from whitewash and repaired; an aisle to the church is being built; and the whole is to be fitted up with new open seats of oak. The organ, which formerly occupied a gallery over the chancel, is to be put on the north side of the church. An ugly gallery at the west end, which blocks up the tower arch, ought to come down; and on the outside the rough cast should be removed, and the flint work restored. A curious brass has been found under the pewing, dated February 14, 1455, to "George Aynesworth," whose figure it gives, with those of his three wives and some fourteen or fifteen children!

From Harrow to Bristol is some distance to jump, but the one word *restoration*, shall serve as a whole line to tie them together. A proposal is on foot, as we have already mentioned, for erecting a fountain in the centre of College-green, Bristol, which, anxious as we are to aid every effort to *adorn* as well as improve our towns, has our warmest approval. It occurs to us, however, to suggest to the good citizens of Bristol, that this would be a good opportunity to amend the error they committed in allowing their ancient High Cross to be taken away some years ago. It was first shifted from one place to another, and ultimately sold (was it for 100*l*?) to the late Sir Richard Colt Hoare, who placed it in his grounds at Stourhead, Wilts, where it now is, though much knocked about and injured by patchings. We would have the Bristolians either move it back and restore it, or if that is not practicable, put up a *fac simile* of it, and make the proposed fountain form part of the design.†

Having mentioned the purchase of one estate just now, we will speak of another, especially as it tells us of the prosperity of an esteemed member of the building fraternity. Norbury Park, near Dorking, comprising from 500 to 600 acres of land, has been bought by Mr. Thomas Grissell, to be his residence. The house was built about seventy years ago by Mr. William Lock, a distinguished connoisseur of that period, and is nicely described by Gilpin in his "Western Counties." Mr. Brayley also

* These windows have an unnecessary quantity of iron bars, horizontal and perpendicular, outside the glass, which can scarcely fail to act injuriously on the stonework.

† A correspondent inquires of us if any detail drawings of the cross have been published? There is a model of it in existence, and several small engraved views of it, but we are not aware of there being any "detail drawings" engraved. We have access to several unpublished drawings made by Carter and others when it was in a more perfect state than it now is in.